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Panels see no CIA death-squad role

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WASHINGTON — Two congressional committees and the CIA are quietly investigating El Salvador's right-wing death squads, and preliminary findings indicate extensive participation by members of Salvadoran military and security forces but no involvement by the CIA.

Information on the investigations came from congressional aides and from documents obtained by The Inquirer Washington Bureau. These sources indicated that investigations also were looking into financing of the squads by exiles based in Miami. Congressional sources said they had learned that it cost \$20,000 to set up one death squad and that one of the groups would kill someone for "a few hundred dollars."

Congressional aides name Salvadoran Col. Nicolas Carranza as a paid informant for the CIA, but the committees' reports have reached no conclusions regarding his possible links to death squads. Neither of the reports has found any indication of CIA involvement in death-squad operations.

"Nothing that we have learned would in any way implicate the Central Intelligence Agency in the undoubtedly obscene and outrageous behavior of individuals and organizations in El Salvador," said Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D., N.Y.), vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

House and Senate intelligence oversight committees — and the CIA itself — opened investigations after widespread allegations that senior Salvadoran military officers, including possible paid CIA informants, had been involved in organizing, funding and directing the death squads.

The Democratic-controlled House Select Committee on Intelligence, after a limited investigation, prepared a four-page report in April concluding that the CIA had no connection to the death squads. The report did, however, note the CIA's inability to infiltrate the death squads because of the danger involved and the constraint implied in a 1981 executive order that says, "No person employed by or acting on behalf of the United States government shall engage in or conspire to engage in assassination."

"The truly successful penetration of such a group death squad," the report stated, "may place a CIA source in a position where he or she is required to perform an assassination."

"At such a moment, when intelligence gains sometimes can be most promising, U.S. policy would prevent the continuation of the source's activities in that group."

The report, obtained last week, criticized the CIA for its initial failure to give the squads a high priority but said the CIA's reporting had improved considerably in response to heightened interest in Congress and in the White House.

The Senate intelligence panel is also assembling a report on the squads. Congressional sources said it would exonerate the CIA but might question the quality of the agency's information. The Senate report asserts that CIA sources included several Salvadoran military intelligence officers who were themselves directly linked to death squads.

Congressional sources familiar with the investigations said the inquiries were undertaken, in part, to prove or disprove allegations by a

former Salvadoran military official of CIA links to high-ranking Salvadoran officials believed connected to the squads. A group of political activists critical of the Reagan administration provided \$50,000 in cash and benefits to the officer in exchange for telling his version to key congressmen and journalists.

The officer has refused to identify himself publicly for fear of reprisal, but the Salvadoran government identified him as Col. Roberto Santivanez, former chief of the Salvadoran army's special military intelligence unit. Until he was dismissed in March, he was the Salvadoran consul in New Orleans.

Santivanez said in March that the squads were shaped by leading Salvadoran officials, including Carranza, until recently chief of the treasury police. Santivanez said Carranza was a paid CIA informant.

Santivanez also said that Roberto D'Aubuisson, former Salvadoran army intelligence officer and losing candidate in this year's presidential election, organized and continued to direct death squads and that Salvadoran exiles in the Miami area financed them.